



PRESS RELEASE

THE ASTANA ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT CENTER: NEW STAGE

ASTANA, KAZAKHSTAN, March 26, 2008 — Today, ExxonMobil Kazakhstan Inc., a local subsidiary of Exxon Mobil Corporation (ExxonMobil), and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) announced the beginning of a new stage of the Astana Enterprise Development Center project. With continued funding from ExxonMobil, USAID transferred the implementation of the Astana Enterprise Development Center project to *Turan-Profi* International Professional Academy (*Turan-Profi*) and the Small and Medium Business/Entrepreneurship Development Federation (SME Federation). USAID will continue assisting the project through technical advice.

The Astana Enterprise Development Center was established in September 2005 by USAID with sponsorship from the ExxonMobil Foundation. To date, USAID has provided \$300,000, while the ExxonMobil Foundation provided \$921,000 in funding for the center. Since its opening, the center has provided about 4,500 entrepreneurs (over 75% of whom are women) with training in strategic and business planning, financial management, marketing, human resources management, taxes, and law. Over 130 small and medium businesses (including 51 women-owned or women-managed companies) received business consulting services.

"I am pleased that the Astana Enterprise Development Center will continue to train business leaders for the future with technical support from USAID. Local implementers have already showed a great ability to carry out this project, and USAID, through its Kazakhstan Small Business Development Project, will help the center excel and become sustainable," said U.S. Ambassador John Ordway.

"This project is funded under the ExxonMobil Foundation *Educating Women and Girls* initiative. We believe that investments in education and increased opportunities for women deliver profound and lasting benefits for all community members and serve as a catalyst for economic and social development," said Steve Rose, General Manager of ExxonMobil Kazakhstan Inc.. "The performance shown by the SME Federation and *Turan-Profi* in their work as local training providers at the Astana EDC have qualified them for receiving direct sponsorship support from the ExxonMobil Foundation. The professionalism and commitment demonstrated by their staff to the further development of small and medium businesses assure us of the project's long-term sustainability and many future successes."

"Through our participation in this project we constantly witness that the ability to acquire knowledge is a precondition to the economic and social progress in the 21st century," stated *Turan-Profi's* Rector Manen Omarov. "Our task is to provide entrepreneurs with practical knowledge and skills, facilitate the increasing role of small and medium business, including support of women-entrepreneurs. According to the National Commission on Family Affairs and Gender Policy under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, almost 40% of entrepreneurs are women."



"We are very excited about the new stage of this project. This is the first time we have received direct support from the ExxonMobil Foundation, which shows their high level of trust in the SME Federation. The quality of training materials developed by the USAID Kazakhstan Small Business Development Project meets entrepreneurs' expectations. The new Business Essentials courses will enable many people in Astana and nearby regions to acquire the business knowledge and skills required to successfully start or improve their business operations," said Eduard Tsoy, Director of the Astana Branch of the Small and Medium Business Development Federation.

Since its inception the Astana EDC was managed by USAID. *Turan-Profi* and the SME Federation have been working as local training providers. As a result of their successful performance, in 2007 the ExxonMobil Foundation extended its direct sponsorship to these two local organizations to continue the Astana Enterprise Development Center project. USAID will provide technical support for the project's implementation. In 2008 the Center will train at least 2,000 entrepreneurs.

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The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is a leading provider of U.S. government foreign assistance around the world. Over the past fifteen years, USAID has delivered over \$500 million in programs that support Kazakhstan's economic growth, healthcare, and democratic institutions. Website: <http://centralasia.usaid.gov>

Exxon Mobil Corporation is a leading oil and gas company with a presence in almost 200 countries around the world. In Kazakhstan, **Exxon Mobil Corporation** through its subsidiaries holds a 25% interest in Tengizchevroil JV, an 18.52% interest in the North Caspian Production Sharing Agreement, and a 7.5% interest in the Caspian Pipeline Consortium. One of the key company strategies is to facilitate the development of local communities. Web-site: www.exxonmobil.com.

The International Professional Academy *Turan-Profi* has been providing educational services in Astana since 2004. The Academy's main focus area is enhancing the qualification of staff working in the central offices and territorial subdivisions of the government and other establishments in the area of common theoretical knowledge and specific practical skills.

Established in 2005, **the Small and Medium Business/Entrepreneurship Development Federation** is working under auspices of the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan. The SME Federation's main activities include the protection of rights and interests of entrepreneurs engaged in small and medium-sized business, the provision of comprehensive help in organizing and conducting business, the establishment of business contacts and the provision of training to upgrade businessmen's qualifications.